

Lesson 3: Acceptance & Denial

Constantine & Arianism



Colossians 1:15-20

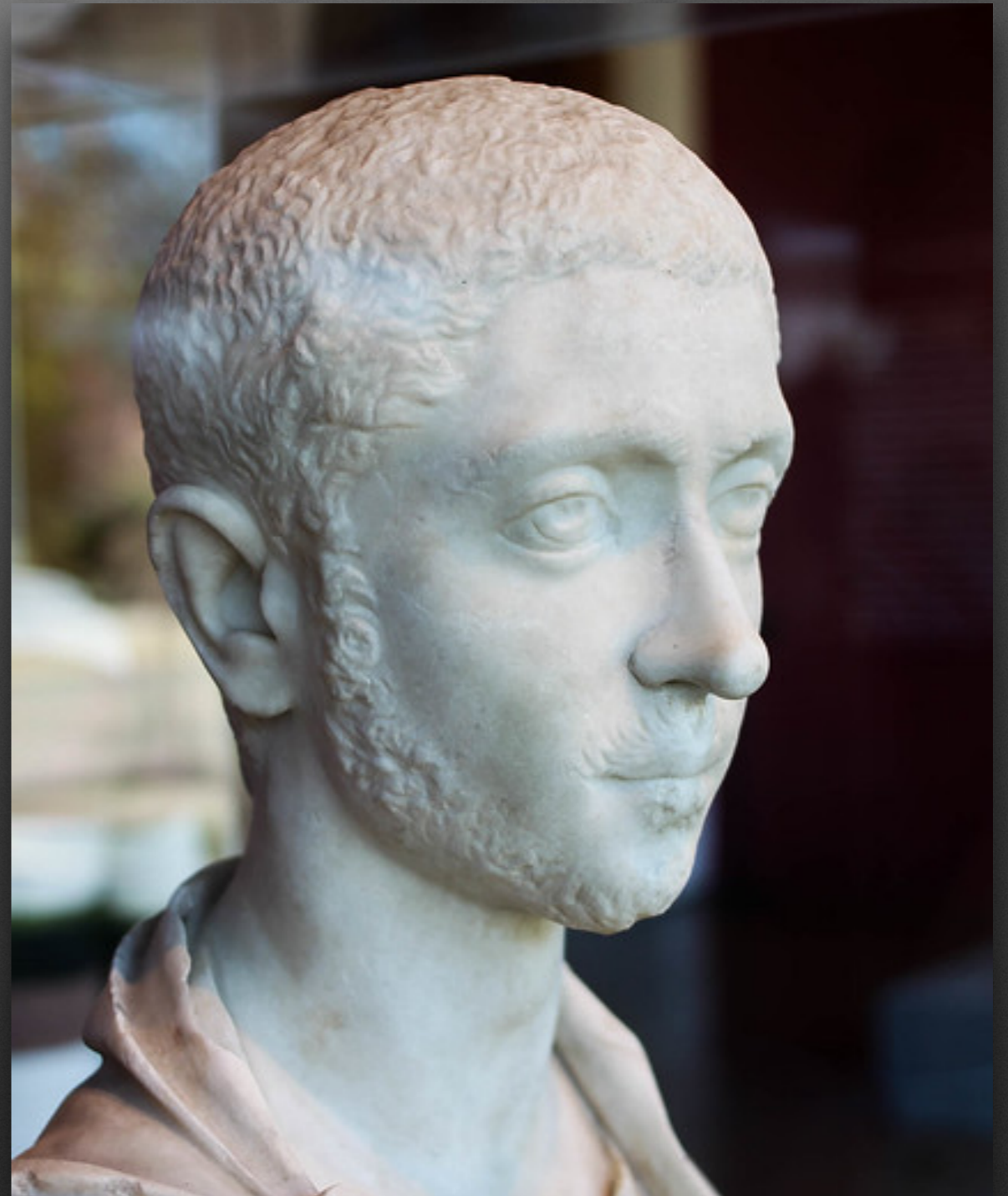
- Christ is the image of God and heir of creation
- Christ is the creator of ALL THINGS
- Christ is the maintainer of ALL THINGS
- Christ is the head of the church
- Christ is the means of reconciliation of ALL THINGS

Persecuted to Protected

- The early days of persecution were rarely empire wide
 - Beginning with Jewish cultural persecution (Acts 7-9)
 - Then to pagan local persecution (Acts 18)
 - State local persecution (Nero)
- The next 200 years reveal a strange teeter-totter between intense persecution, to indifferent toleration, to state protection

Toloration

- Alexander Severus (222-235)
 - One of the first “friendly” emperors
 - Hired Julius Africanus
 - Images of Christ and Abraham in his private chapel



Persecution

- Decius (250-251)
- Blamed Christians for Rome's weakness
- Targeted leaders to eradicate the Church



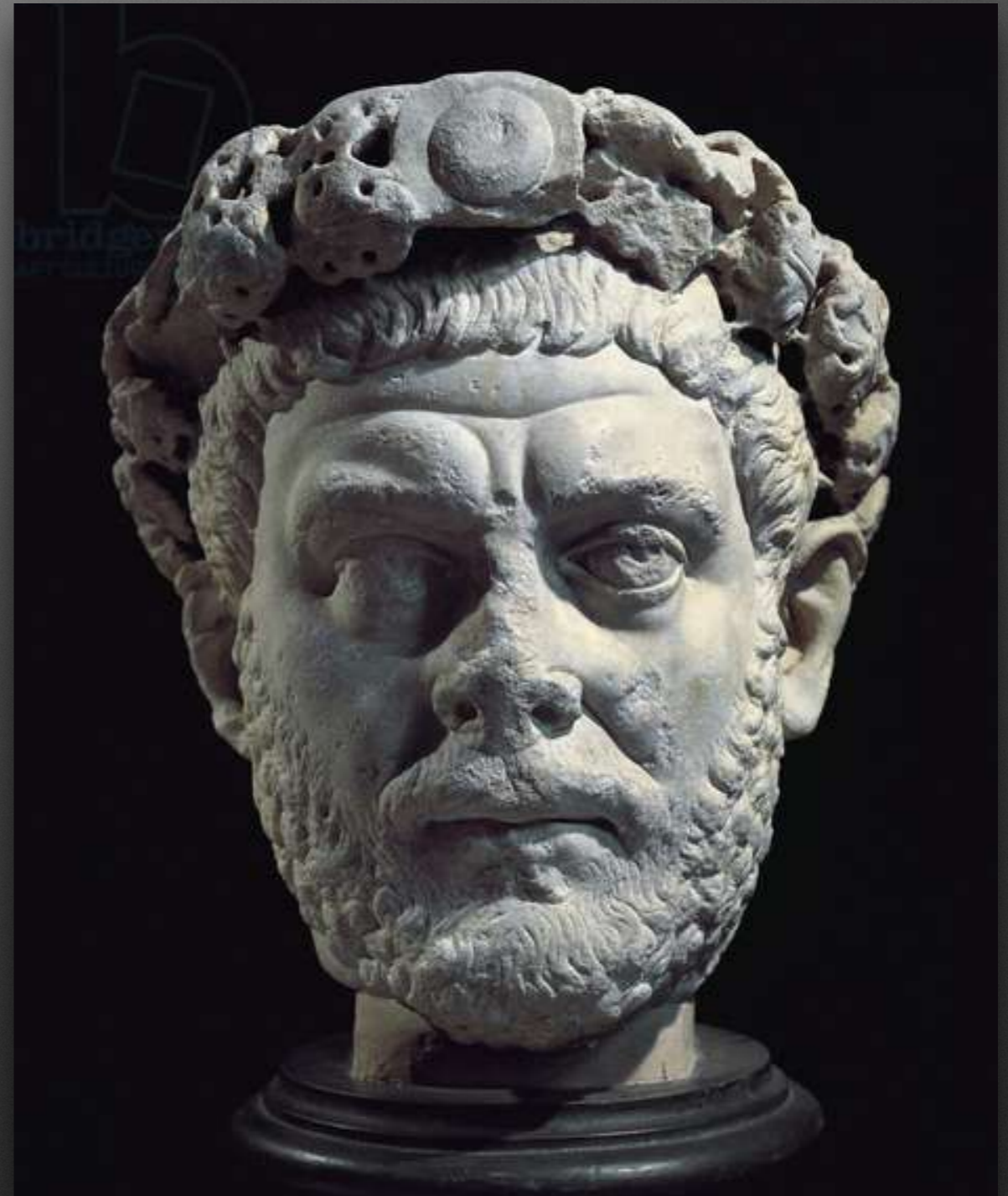
Persecution

- Valerian (253-260)
 - Prohibited meeting
 - Targeted pastors and elders



Toleration

- Diocletian (284-305)
 - Policial Reformer
 - Religious toleration at first
 - Destroy buildings and Bibles (303)
 - Arrest clergy (303)
 - Mandatory pagan sacrifice for the clergy (303)
 - All citizens sacrifice or die (304)



Toleration to Protection

- Constantine (280-337)
 - Gained control of the West & converted to Christianity (312)
 - Gained control of the East to protect Christianity (324)
 - Genuine of conversion always a question



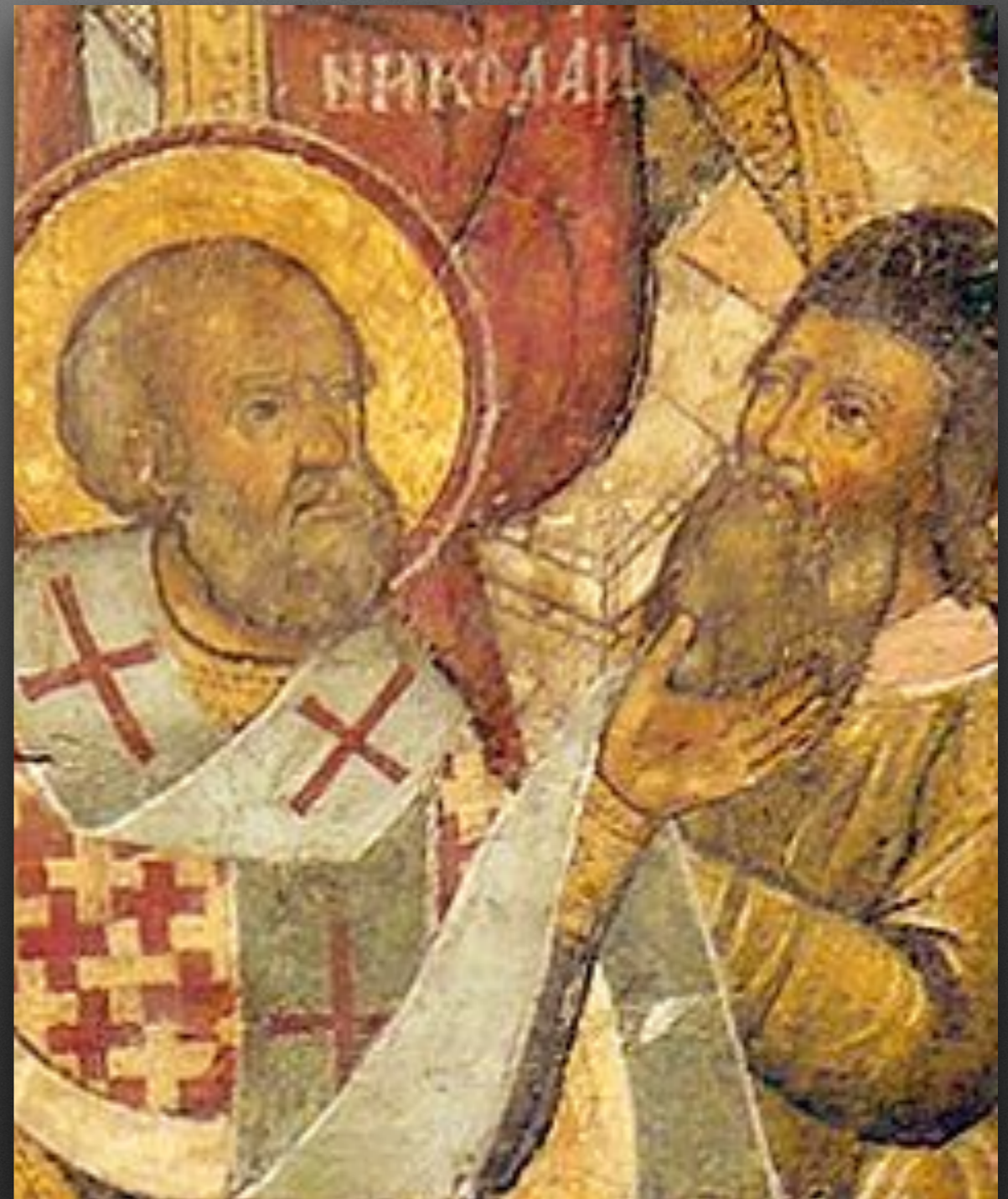
The Arian Controversy

- Arius (256-336)
 - Popular Preacher from Libya
 - Began teaching in Alexandria that the Father alone was God
 - God the Son (the Logos) was created before the universe
 - There was a time when the Son did not exist



Division

- Arius challenged the accepted view of Origen
- Alexander challenged both Arius and the accepted view of Origen
- The Church in the East grew vastly divided
- Emperor Constantine put every one in a room and told them to work it out.



The Nicene Creed (325)

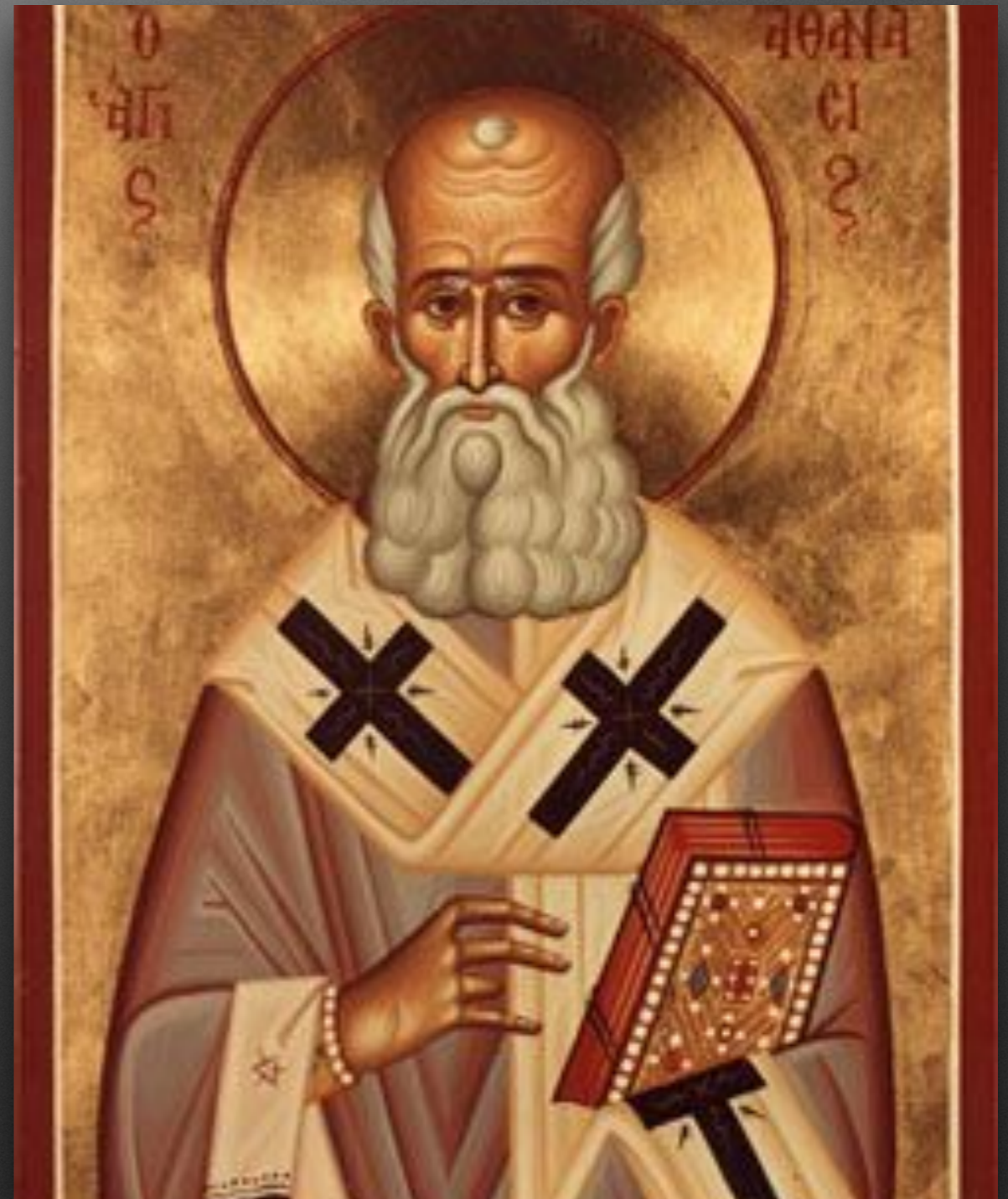
We believe in one God, the Father almighty, Creator of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the essence of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not created, of the same essence as the Father, through Whom all things were created both in heaven and on earth; Who for us human beings and for our salvation came down and was incarnate, was made man, suffered and rose again on the third day, ascended into heaven, and is coming again to judge the living and the dead; and in the Holy Spirit.

The Post-Nicene Church

- The creed provided a cover of unity with the reality of distinct division
 - The Arian Party - Unrepentant reprobates who think the Son is a created being
 - The Nicene Party - Those who agreed with the creed that the Father and Son are equally God
 - The Origen Party - “Traditionalists” who held that the Son was NOT created and very much God, yet inferior in some aspects to the Father

Athanasius (296-373)

- Alexandrian Bishop (328)
- Took the Nicene side
 - 2 Peter 1:4
 - Worship of created being = idolatry
 - Galvanized the doctrine of the Trinity
 - Banished twice after Constantine



The Fate of Arianism

- Valens (Arian Emperor of the East) died and was replaced by a Nicene Emperor - Theodosius
 - Issued an order to recognize only Nicenes as Christian
 - All church buildings were thus handed over to the Nicenes
- The West already had Nicene Emperor
- Arius received the judgment of God.

Modern Day Equivalent

- Jehovah's Witness/Watch Tower
 - Blindly defend Monothelism without thinking
 - Deny the Trinity
 - State that Jesus was created being
 - Manipulate and ignore the text when necessary.

Conclusion

- Once again the Church was assaulted with false teaching
- Once again the Church remained grounded upon the clear teaching of Scripture
- Through conflict came...
 - Unity in Doctrine
 - Clarity in Doctrine